

State of Hawaii Occupational Profile on Police Officers

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"Police officers are among the occupations that are indispensable yet undervalued. The career is rewarding but underpaid. As a result, Hawaii is suffering from a shortage of police officers."

Excerpts from The Honolulu Advertiser editorial, September 9, 2002

The threat of terrorism has renewed a sense of awareness and appreciation for law enforcement. Never before has the public become more vigilant as the country adjusts to the reality of terrorism. Police officers are among the occupations in public safety whose responsibilities are to protect lives and property. Police officers must constantly be alert and ready to deal appropriately with threatening situations and the danger of confrontation with criminals. To ensure public safety, police officers are called upon to maintain order, enforce laws and ordinances, and protect lives and property. They patrol a designated area; direct traffic; issue traffic summons; investigate accidents; apprehend, arrest, and process prisoners; and testify in court. Although police work can be dangerous and stressful, many seek these positions because they present a challenge and involve personal responsibility.

Qualifications:

Applicants for police recruits must be admitted through civil service procedures for all counties in Hawaii. There are three phases to becoming a police officer: the selection process, classroom training, and field training. All recruits must successfully pass a probationary period of 18 months before becoming a regular member of Civil Service and be promoted to a police officer. The examination/selection process is part of the probationary period in which civil service benefits are also accrued in addition to earning a salary.

At the time of application, the following requirements must be met:

Age: 20 years of age.

Education: Equivalent to graduation from high school.

License: Valid motor vehicle driver's license (Type 3).

Firearms: Must meet Federal and State eligibility requirements to possess firearms.

Citizenship and Residency: Citizen, national or permanent resident alien of the United States.

(Effective May 18, 2000, applications from non-residents are accepted.)

Selection Process:

As part of the selection process, which is approximately 6-7 months in duration, the applicant's character and background is thoroughly reviewed to determine suitability for employment. Recruits must possess sound moral character, integrity, and credibility, which demonstrate their effectiveness in carrying out the various duties and responsibilities of the position.

Federal and state eligibility requirements to possess firearms must also be met. Disqualification may result from convictions of any felony, crime of violence, illegal sale of any drug, misdemeanor of domestic violence, etc.

Applicants must meet the health and physical condition standards required of the position.

After passing a reading comprehension and writing skills test, applicants are placed on an eligibility list. Following a referral to the Police Department, applicants must complete a questionnaire on the applicant's personal history and a series of psychological and behavioral assessments. Oral interviews are conducted by both the department and a police psychologist, followed by a polygraph test and a thorough investigation of the applicant's character and background. The steps in the selection process may vary among the counties.

Classroom Training

After six to eight months of administrative and psychological testing and background investigations, applicants must experience another set of challenges and demands in the next seven months of intense classes on law, communication, police procedures, functional police skills, and organization. Student officers are required to pass 16 examinations with a minimum score of 70. Each student officer must pass the physical fitness requirements regardless of age or gender that involves a 300 meter run, 25 pushups, 29 sit ups, 16 inches vertical jump, bench press, and a 1.5 mile run, all within a minimum required time or specification.

Students must endure daily written reports, weekly academic exams and physical tests, and inspections. The academy is military-style and is rigidly structured.

Duration of Classroom Training By County

<u>Area</u>	<u>Length of Term</u>	<u>Sessions Per Year</u>	<u>Average Class Size</u>
Honolulu MSA	28 weeks	3-6	60 maximum
Hawaii County	30 weeks	1-2 as needed	12-19
Maui County	33 weeks	1 as needed	11
Kauai County	32 weeks	1-2 as needed	5

Police recruits must successfully pass and graduate from the training academy before moving on to the next phase of field training.

Field Training

After graduation from the academy, the recruits are closely supervised and evaluated on a daily basis in a 14-week program on what they have learned, how they apply their skills and knowledge to the job, and how to improve their performance and ability to function as patrol officers safely and properly on their own. Each recruit is assigned to a veteran officer, whose responsibility is to train and evaluate the recruit. In Honolulu MSA, depending on the district assigned to, a recruit may be required to work 4/10 work schedule (4 days a week, 10 hours a day) or a 5/9 work schedule with every other week a 4/9 schedule. The county is divided into districts and each district is divided into sectors. Each sector is further divided into beats. Each recruit is assigned to a beat and handles cases that occur on his or her beat during the work shift.

Education:

Applicants must have at least a high school diploma or an equivalent. As part of a three-phase process of becoming a police officer, candidates must also endure around seven months of intense classroom instruction at the training academy. After graduating from the training academy, the recruit must endure field training, which is primarily on-the-job training. The extensive training is estimated to cost about \$78,000 per recruit.

Wages

In the City & County of Honolulu, the salary of police recruits range from \$2,784-\$3,669 monthly. Police officer I positions pay between \$3,006-\$4,146 per month. Advancing to the police officer II position will pay \$3,252-\$4,328 per month.

In 2001, the average statewide wages for police officers were \$17.86 per hour or \$37,160 annually. Average hourly wages are similar among counties. First line supervisors make an average of \$25.53 or \$54,860 per year. Overtime wages may be significant and additional earnings often exceed the wages as reported.

Comparatively, police officers in Hawaii are paid lower than the national average of \$20.17 per hour or \$41,950 annually. The accompanying table provides average wages for various Western states.

**Average Wages of Police Officers
in Western States, 2001**

<u>State</u>	<u>Average Hourly Wage</u>	<u>Annual Wage</u>
California	\$26.20	\$54,500
Oregon	\$20.65	\$42,950
Washington	\$23.74	\$49,390
Nevada	\$23.31	\$48,480
Arizona	\$20.23	\$42,080
Hawaii	\$17.86	\$37,160
United States	\$20.17	\$41,950

Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics,
2001 Occupational Employment & Wage Estimates

Supply and Demand

As of October 31, 2002, there were 125 recruits in training in Honolulu MSA, according to the Honolulu Police Department. An estimated 75 percent of police recruits are completers of training. With the actual number of vacancies as of October 2002 at 238, the number of completers are unable to meet the increasing number of vacancies, brought on by retirement or other forms of attrition.

Vacancies are also prevalent in Maui, Hawaii, and Kauai counties. Both Maui and Hawaii counties had 23 sworn vacancies while Kauai County had 17. The shortage of police officers spans across the nation and is not limited to Hawaii and its counties, making it very competitive among states. Police recruiters are hindered by the job's low pay, marked image, tough standards for new recruits, and limited job flexibility. Competition has also increased due to new federal or private security jobs. Compounding the shortage is the retirement of the police workforce last year brought on by recent legislative changes to the pension plan. Another contributing reason may be that the local police department does not allow lateral pay transfers based on years of experience as allowed by many police departments on the Mainland.

Only an estimated 5 percent of the applicants are hired. Classes are smaller in numbers and are conducted in Maui, Hawaii, and Kauai counties as applicant demand arises for new recruits.

Employment

Employment of police officers statewide totaled approximately 2,900. Data provided by the Honolulu Police Department indicate there were 2,056 sworn police officers employed as of October 2002. There were 319 police officers in Maui County and 131 in Kauai County. Employment in Hawaii County stood at 377 in early November 2002.

What it takes to be a Police Officer

Police officers patrol assigned areas to enforce laws and ordinances, regulate traffic, control crowds, prevent crime, and arrest violators. It is important for police officers to build skills in critical thinking, social perceptiveness, problem identification, speaking, active listening, information gathering, and judgment and decision making. They must be able to use logic and analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to a situation, be aware of people's reactions and understand why people react the way they do, and be able to identify the nature of the problems. By successfully talking and listening to people, the police officer will be able to obtain essential information to determine a course of action. The table below identifies the skills, ranked by importance, that are required to be successful as a police officer.

Skills Considered Important for Police Officers

(Ranked by order of importance)

Importance	Skills	Description
1	Critical Thinking	Using logic and analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches
2	Social Perceptiveness	Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react the way they do
3	Problem Identification	Identifying the nature of problems
4	Speaking	Talking to others to effectively convey information
5	Active Listening	Listening to what other people are saying and asking questions as appropriate
6	Information Gathering	Knowing how to find information and identifying essential information
7	Judgment and Decision Making	Weighing the relative costs and benefits of a potential action

Police officers must acquire the knowledge of public safety and security; law, government and jurisprudence; medicine and dentistry; and the English language to become successful. For the safety and security of the public, it is very important to have the knowledge of weaponry, public safety, and security operations. Knowing the rules, regulations, precautions, prevention, and the protection of people, data, and property is also important.

Being a police officer also requires the knowledge of laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process. In situations requiring medical treatment, having the knowledge of techniques needed to diagnose and treat injuries, diseases, and deformities is essential. Knowledge of the English language is also important.

Knowledge Considered Important for Police Officers

(Ranked by order of importance)

Importance	Knowledge	Description
1	Public Safety and Security	Knowledge of weaponry, public safety, and security operations, rules, regulations, precautions, prevention, and the protection of people, data, and property
2	Law, Government and Jurisprudence	Knowledge of laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process
3	Medicine and Dentistry	Knowledge of the information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventative health-care measures
4	English Language	Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar

To carry out the required duties, police officers must acquire specific abilities. These include oral expression, reaction time, inductive reasoning, written expression, far vision, oral comprehension, written comprehension, problem sensitivity, time sharing, and speech clarity. It is vital to communicate and understand information and ideas by speaking clearly or in writing. The ability to respond quickly to a signal, to combine pieces of information or answers to form a conclusion, to communicate information and ideas in writing for others to understand, to be able to tell when something is wrong or likely to go wrong, to see details from a distance, and to recognize a problem is also essential. Other important abilities are included in the table below.

Abilities Considered Important for Police Officers

(Ranked by order of importance)

Importance	Ability	Description
1	Oral Expression	The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand
2	Reaction time	The ability to quickly respond (with the hand, finger, or foot) to one signal (sound, light, picture, etc.) when it appears
3	Inductive Reasoning	The ability to combine separate pieces of information, or specific answers to problems, to form general rules or conclusions. It includes coming up with a logical explanation for why a series of seemingly unrelated events occur together
4	Written Expression	The ability to communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand
5	Far Vision	The ability to see details at a distance
6	Oral Comprehension	The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences
7	Written Comprehension	The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing
8	Problem Sensitivity	The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem
9	Time Sharing	The ability to efficiently shift back and forth between two or more activities or sources of information (such as speech, sounds, touch, or other sources)
10	Speech Clarity	The ability to speak clearly so that it is understandable to a listener

Interested in Becoming a Police Officer?

Information on the process of becoming a police officer and an application is available at the following offices or by accessing the web sites listed below:

HONOLULU MSA:

City & County of Honolulu
Department of Human Resources
650 South King Street, 10th Floor
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
24-hour Job Information: (808) 523-4301
www.co.honolulu.hi.us

Honolulu Police Department
www.honolulupd.org/

MAUI COUNTY:

Department of Personnel Services
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii 96793
Phone: (808) 270-7850
www.co.maui.hi.us/

Maui County Police Department
www.co.maui.hi.us/departments/Police/policeemp.htm

HAWAII COUNTY:

Hawaii County Civil Service Department
101 Aupuni Street, Suite 133
Hilo, Hawaii 96720
24-hour Job Hotline: (808) 961-8618
www.hawaii-county.com/civil_serv/civ_serv.htm

Mayor's Kona Office
75-5706 Kuakini Highway, Suite 103
Kailua-Kona, Hawaii 96740
Phone: (808) 961-8619

Hawaii County Police Department
www.hawaiipolice.com

KAUAI COUNTY:

Department of Personnel Services
4444 Rice Street, Suite 140
Lihue, Hawaii 96766
Phone: (808) 241-6595
www.kauaigov.org/personnel.htm

Kauai Police Department
3060 Umi Street
Lihue, HI 96766
Phone: (808) 241-6719

Sources

Education and Training Categories, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

2001 Occupational Employment & Wage Estimates, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics,
http://www.bls.gov/oes/2000/oes_nat.htm

2001 State of Hawaii Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, www.loihi.state.hi.us

City & County of Honolulu, Classification and Compensation Plan, <http://www.co.honolulu.hi.us/hr/eps.htm>

Career Kokua Occupations, Volume 2, Hawaii State Dept. of Labor & Industrial Relations, 2002-2003

Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002-2003,
www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm

*O*NET Online* (Occupational Information Network), <http://online.onetcenter.org/>

The Honolulu Advertiser, Editorial, September 9, 2002

The Honolulu Advertiser, *HPD Struggling with Vacancies*, October 1, 2002

Honolulu Police Department, Human Resources Division, Career Center, www.honolulupd.org/hrd

Maui County Police Department, Community Relations

Hawaii County Police Department, Community Relations

Kauai County Police Department, Community Relations